

On September 11, the world watched in horror as nearly 3,000 Americans lost their lives in the terrorist attacks on World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and on Flight 93, that crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

September 11 is one of the defining events of an entire generation. Each of us vividly remembers where we were and how we heard the news of the attacks. Like so many others, I watched as the second plane slammed into the World Trade Center, and then as the two towers came crashing down. I heard the reports of the attack on the Pentagon, then the news that the last plane had crashed in Pennsylvania. And like all Americans, I sat in shock and horror worrying about the safety of my loved ones.

I was lucky enough to find out that everyone I knew was safe. Many were not so lucky. The events of September 11 helped me to take stock in my life and to appreciate the enormous sacrifice of ordinary Americans.

This tragic moment in our history produced a new definition of the word “hero.” You could see this exemplified on Halloween in 2001 when children across America traded in their Superman and Spiderman costumes for those of fireman, policeman and paramedics. On September 11th children witnessed real heroes – the firemen who rushed into the burning Twin Towers, the police who did everything possible to rescue those in need, and the medical personnel who tirelessly worked to save lives. It has been said before, but should be remembered everyday – these ordinary people did extraordinary things without hesitation and with enormous sacrifice.

There were also heroes in the sky that day. The brave passengers of Flight 93 saved the lives of others by forcing their plane to the ground. What an incredible act of self-sacrifice! And let’s not forget the workers who came to ground zero day after day to sift through the rubble, looking for survivors, and eventually looking for the remains of the victims. They are heroes.

On the 2nd Anniversary of September 11th, I think again of my loved ones and I want to say to all the families and friends who lost someone on this heartbreaking day – you are heroes. You have endured an unthinkable loss and yet everyday find the strength to go on. I admire your courage and resilience. You are a great inspiration to all Americans.

Let us honor the valor and sacrifice of these heroes by living life to the fullest. Let us reflect on their actions and lives and be inspired to build a better America.